

CITY OF ABERDEEN
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES

Wednesday, October 10, 2012

A meeting of the Aberdeen Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m., July 18, 2012 in the Council Chambers by Chairman Swisher.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Swisher, Commissioners Heavey, Miller, Preston, and Schlottman.

OTHERS PRESENT: Phyllis Grover, Director of Planning & Community Development
Steve Wallis, City Engineer, Department of Public Works
Lt. Fred Budnick, Aberdeen Police Department (also representing the Aberdeen Volunteer Fire Department)
Gil Jones, Recording Secretary

The minutes of the September 12, 2012, meeting were approved.

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. Review Proposed Text Amendment to the Code of the City of Aberdeen, Chapter 235 – Development Code, for mini-warehouse and warehouse facilities

Mrs. Grover referred to the discussion on this issue at last month's meeting and her request to the Commission at that time to look at both the current language in the Development Code and to visit areas in the B-3 zoning district before making a determination on this amendment. She related the history of this effort, as it stemmed from the previous comprehensive re-zoning and the desire of a property owner on Beards Hill Road to put a self-storage facility on said property, next to a potential apartment complex. The City Manager tasked Mrs. Grover with drafting a text amendment that would speak to this issue and presenting it to the Planning Commission. She indicated that comments have been received from Joseph Snee, attorney for the property owner, and Phyllis Friedman, owner of the Stack and Store on South Philadelphia Boulevard in Aberdeen. These comments were also provided to the Commission members.

Mrs. Heavey said she looked at various B-3 areas and feels that properties where these facilities would fit in have largely been re-zoned from M-1, specifically areas off Maryland Route 715, the area behind Wal-Mart, and on Old Philadelphia Road. She also looked at the Harford County zoning regulations, which include setbacks from residential property for these types of facilities. In summary, she doesn't feel this use is appropriate for B-3, based on the Aberdeen Development Code definition of the purpose for this district.

Mr. Swisher feels the two issues to address are development of a definition of a mini-warehouse and whether it should be a permitted use in a B-3 district or a special exception. He alluded to the comments from Mr. Snee and Mrs. Friedman, and also reiterated his view from last month's meeting that each location be required to have a store that sells storage-related items, such as

boxes and locks. Mrs. Grover referred the Commission to the memo sent in June with a proposed definition and a proposed change in the Code appendix referring to the allowed uses. She feels the definition and whether to allow this use in a B-3 district are two different issues, and suggested perhaps developing the definition, then recommending where they would be allowed as a permitted use.

Mr. Swisher asked Mr. Snee if he had any comments. Mr. Snee indicated the proposed regulation would allow for a maximum lot size of 5 acres. However, many of these sites are up to 10 acres. He indicated both the Harford County and Havre de Grace Codes allow for this as a permitted use in their B-3 districts. Rick Chadsy of Property Sales LLC, representing the owner of the prospective apartment property and proposed adjacent self-storage property on Beards Hill Road, said that most self-storage properties are larger than 5 acres. His company usually goes with 10-acre sites, since various environmental restrictions generally leave them with lesser amounts of useable space. In addition, all of their current properties have stores in conjunction with the leasing office and have someone who lives in an apartment on-site. Mr. Swisher asked about fencing of the properties. Mr. Chadsy said they have varying types of fencing, usually a 10-foot fence with barbed wire on the top. If the site is next to a residential area, the fencing will have slats. Mr. Swisher questioned as to whether the City should require fencing in the amendment. Mrs. Grover felt this would be appropriate, especially if the site is used to store recreational vehicles, cars, boats, trailers, and similar items.

Mrs. Heavey asked about the terms “mini-storage,” “self-storage,” and “outdoor storage.” Mr. Chadsy said the current preferred term is “self-storage facility” due to the negative connotation of the term “mini-storage.” He indicated there is no difference between the various terms.

Mr. Schlottman asked about the occupancy rate. Mr. Chadsy said in a densely populated area with little commercial activity the rate is about 80 to 85%. If the facility is in a commercial area, the occupancy is close to 100%.

Mr. Swisher suggested Mrs. Grover and a Commission member or two come up with a revised definition based on tonight’s comments. Mr. Schlottman said he would work with Mrs. Grover on this. Mrs. Grover asked the Commission members to also look at the information she distributed and send her their comments. Mr. Swisher said the definition may also want to address outside storage. He also asked each member for their opinion on whether they felt such a use should be in the B-3 district as a permitted use or special exception, or whether such use should be in an M-1 district. Mr. Miller and Ms. Preston expressed no opinion at this time. Mr. Schlottman at this point feels no, that these uses take up a lot of land and employ few people. Mrs. Heavey said that given the definition of B-3 in the Development Code she would be opposed to such a use in this particular district, even as a special exception. Mr. Swisher said he is undecided, but leans toward a permitted use in B-3 with special exception.

At this point, the Chairman asked for audience comment. Dudley Campbell of Bay State Land Services indicated these particular units are designed for family use, not industrial. He spoke to the semantics of warehouse versus self-storage, as well as the nature of self-storage facilities. He suggested it be allowed as a permitted use in a B-3 district, but with greater requirements for landscaping, as well as for setbacks and/or screening from residential uses.

2. Preliminary Site Plan for The Colony at Beards Hill

Location: North side of Beards Hill Road, between Barnette Lane and Maxa Road.

Representatives: Joseph Snee, attorney, Gestner, Snee, Mahoney & Lutche; Dudley Campbell, Bay State Land Services; and Rick Chadsy, The Colony at Beards Hill LLC (contract purchaser).

Mr. Campbell distributed copies of the slides used in the power point presentation to the Commission members. Mr. Snee described the parcel, its size, and location. He pointed out the City's sewer pumping station as being the only thing currently on the site. The proposed apartment complex would have a total of 15 buildings, including a single-story clubhouse with a fitness area, swimming pool, wading pool, and bath house. Six of the buildings will be three stories high, with a fourth, basement level floor (due to the grade); the remaining nine buildings are all three stories. There will be a total of 192 units, with 492 parking spaces provided, to include 24 handicapped spaces. Storm water management (SWM) facilities would be on site. Mr. Snee indicated the architectural and façade features of this project would be similar to those at The Summit at Owings Mills, another project built by Mr. Chadsy's company. Rents for the Aberdeen project are expected to be in the \$1,400 to \$1,500 range. All of the units would be of the two-bedroom, two-bath variety.

Mr. Swisher asked if the white space shown on the drawing on either side of the pool is intended to be a playground. Mr. Chadsy said this area is planned to be open space for now. Mr. Swisher asked how many units are in a building at The Summit at Owings Mills. Mr. Chadsy said there are 12, unless it is one of the 3-4 splits, then it will have 14 units.

Mrs. Grover indicated that by using 2.5 parking spaces per unit instead of 1.5 or 2 spaces per unit, the project is over-parked. Mr. Chadsy said his company has an internal requirement of 2.5 spaces per unit. They are planning on having overflow parking near the pool area, and may have covered parking in some areas. Recreational vehicles, trailers, boats, etc., will not be allowed. He added that his company owns and manages all of its properties, a total of about 9,000 townhouse and apartment units, and do all of their maintenance and trash collection.

Mrs. Grover asked why the parking is planned for the area between the apartment buildings and Beards Hill Road. Mr. Campbell said this is to provide traffic separation and to address noise and safety issues in relation to Beards Hill Road. Mr. Chadsy said they intend to also put a landscaped berm in this area. Mrs. Grover asked if sidewalks would be provided along Beards Hill Road. Mr. Campbell said yes, there would be a 36-foot improved paved area and sidewalks. In addition, the developer would build Road A to City specifications (this road will provide access to the City-owned property behind the subject property). Mrs. Grover said that Lt. Bane of the Aberdeen Police Department, in his written comments to her, had expressed concern over traffic safety along Beards Hill Road.

Lt. Budnick said he is pleased with the security camera arrangement. From a Fire Department standpoint, this would not be much different from the other complexes in Aberdeen in terms of traffic flow. The difference is these apartments will have sprinklers, whereas many of the others in Aberdeen do not. Mr. Campbell said he will get input from the Aberdeen Fire Department in terms of hydrant placement, and then provide as-built drawings when completed.

Mr. Wallis read into the record the comments that had been sent to Mr. Campbell, to wit: Provide owner signature block; Verify deed reference (7024/496); Note 26 is a duplicate of Note 21; Note 28 is no longer required; Add a note "existing sewer manholes to be rehabilitated as required by the City of Aberdeen;" Add note "Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) permit is required;" Provide floodplain elevation; Provide signed and sealed letter from the engineer certifying water and sewer usage; Provide road improvements to Beards Hill Road (ultimate 36-foot paved road, curb and gutter, and storm drain) on development side; Please consider aligning private access road to Middleton Road/Beards Hill Road intersection; Show and label existing utilities in Beards Hill Road including existing storm drains, fire hydrants, 8-inch water line, and 10-inch sewer line; On-site utilities should be private and include a master water meter within an easement; Record a deed for the Carsins Run Sewer Pumping Station (in fee); Record easements centered over the existing sewer system; Consider replacing the Carsins Run Sewer Pumping Station generator with a "quiet run" type generator; Please remove all utilities, paving, curb, and gutter from the existing drainage and utility easements; Provide clear access points at all existing sewer manholes; Provide a 20-foot gravel access road within the easements over the existing sewer (in areas not in the floodplain); Access Road A needs to be a public 36-foot paved section to access the City property in the rear (future park); Extend a public water main from Beards Hill Road (8-inch) in Road A to the rear property line, to include public fire hydrants; Provide valves on each branch of the public water tee; Spacing of the public fire hydrants should not exceed 600 feet; Please show and label all SWM easements, including access from a public road; Provide a SWM concept plan (to be followed by a site development plan, then a final SWM plan); and proposed SWM should not be located in the floodplain. Mr. Wallis reiterated his point about the generator at the pump station, adding that it is diesel-powered and is not quiet. In addition, the proposed landscaped berm would need to be out of the public right-of-way. Mr. Campbell said it would be out of the right-of-way.

Mr. Miller asked if the units would be furnished. Mr. Chadsy said they would not be.

Mr. Schlottman asked if the units would be built as the market dictates. Mr. Chadsy said there is no way to finance a project such as this without building out the whole thing, that the financial institutions now require it this way. Mr. Schlottman asked if the pool and/or clubhouse would be available for rent by non-residents. Mr. Chadsy said no, both would be for the use of residents and their guests only.

Mrs. Heavey asked about the location of the "extra floor" buildings. Mr. Chadsy said these would be built in areas not facing Beards Hill Road and would follow the topography of the parcel. Mrs. Heavey asked about the location and convenience of handicapped parking spaces. Mr. Chadsy said that certain units are set up to be handicapped accessible; the final location of these has yet to be determined. In the event all of the handicapped accessible units are rented out, other units may be re-done to accommodate a handicapped person and the parking spaces re-stripped for that unit. Mrs. Heavey asked about trash collection and if dumpsters would be used. Mr. Chadsy said trash would be collected twice per week and taken to a proposed compactor on the B-3 lot next door. Mr. Campbell said if a trash compactor is not allowed in the B-3, dumpsters would be used.

Mr. Chadsy asked Mr. Wallis if the adjacent parcel, now owned by 84 Lumber, would be able to access (Road A). Mr. Wallis said that since Road A would be a public road, they would be able to access it.

Mr. Swisher asked if the apartments would all feature electric heat. Mr. Chadsy said they would, unless BGE wants to loop its gas line up from the nearby commercial areas. Mr. Swisher asked Mr. Campbell about the parcels shown on his colored drawing. Mr. Campbell said they are shown on the plan because they are on the original record plat prepared by others. He said that once a determination is made as to the use of the B-3 portion of the property, a subdivision plat eliminating those parcels would be brought before the Planning Commission for approval. Mr. Swisher addressed the City Council members present in the audience (Mr. Garner, Mrs. Landbeck, and Mrs. Young) and expressed his concerns over Beards Hill Road and the additional traffic to be generated by this project. He feels the City needs to look into improving Beards Hill Road (in conjunction with the developer taking care of his side of the road), and to see if a traffic light at the intersection of Beards Hill Road and Paradise Road may be needed.

At this point, the Chairman asked for audience comment. There were no comments forthcoming.

Motion by Mr. Schlottman, seconded by Ms. Preston, to approve the Preliminary Site Plan for The Colony at Beards Hill, contingent upon the inclusion and consideration of staff comments. Motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business or public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Planning Commission Chairman

Recording Secretary

Date of Approval